

**Orangeburg County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
February 2004**

During the week of February 23 thru 27, 2004 a team of five DSS staff from state office, Richland County DSS and Area B Adoptions conducted an on-site review of child welfare services in Orangeburg County.

Period included in Case Record Review: Aug 15, 2003 to Feb 15, 2004

Period included in Outcome Measures: Dec 1, 2002 to Nov 30, 2003

Purpose

The Department of Social Services engages in a review of child welfare services in each county to:

- a) Determine to what degree services are delivered in compliance with federal and state laws and agency policy; and
- b) Assess the outcomes for children and families engaged in the child welfare system.

State law (sec 43-1-115) states, in part:

The state department shall conduct, at least once every five years, a substantive quality review of the child protective services and foster care programs in each county and each adoption office in the State. The county's performance must be assessed with reference to specific outcome measures published in advance by the department.

The information obtained by the child welfare services review process will:

- a) Give county staff feedback on the effectiveness of their interventions.
- b) Direct state office technical assistance staff to assist county staff with their areas needing improvement.
- c) Inform agency administrators of which systemic factors impair county staff's ability to achieve specific outcomes.
- d) Direct training staff to provide training for county staff specific to their needs.

Quantitative and Qualitative Data Sources

The county-specific review of child welfare services is both quantitative and qualitative.

The review is **quantitative** because it begins with an analysis of every child welfare outcome report for that county for the period under review. The outcome reports reflect the performance of the county in all areas of the child welfare program: CPS Intake, CPS Investigations, CPS In-Home Treatment, Foster Care, Managed Treatment Services (MTS), and Adoptions.

The review is **qualitative** because it includes an analysis of information obtained from agency clients, staff and stakeholders. Client and stakeholder information is obtained by focus groups, interviews and surveys. The questions posed to clients and stakeholders are designed to illicit information about the quality of the services rendered and the effectiveness of those services.

**Orangeburg County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
February 2004**

Section One

Safety Outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect Site Visit Findings				
	Substantially Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved	Not Applicable
Foster Care	7			3
CPS Treatment	4	1		1
Unfounded Investigations	3	2		

Measure: Timeliness of initiating investigations on reports of child maltreatment High Risk = 0 to 2 hrs. Medium Risk = 2 to 12 hrs. Low Risk = 12 to 24 hrs.* Data Time Period: 12/1/02 to 11/30/03				
	Number of Reports Accepted	Number of Investigations Initiated Timely	Number of Investigations Met Objective >= 99.44%	Number of Investigations Above (Below) Objective
State	18,177	18,144	18,075	68.79
Orangeburg	270	268	268.49	(0.49)

Note: This standard is based on DSS policy. It is not a federally established objective.

Measure: Recurrence of Maltreatment – Of all children who were victims of indicated reports of child abuse and/or neglect during the reporting period, the percent having another indicated report within a subsequent 6 month period. Indicated Rept Between Jun 1, 2002 and May 31, 2003 Subsequent Indicated report on or before Nov 30, 2003				
	Number of Child Victims	Number of Child Victims In Another Founded Rept	Number of Children Met Objective >= 93.90%*	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	9,910	88	9,305.49	516.51
Orangeburg	120	0	112.68	7.32

Note: This is a federally established objective.

Analysis

Safety outcome #1 was substantially achieved as indicated by both site visit findings and outcome reports. All but two of the cases reviewed onsite were investigated within agency timeframes. Two unfounded investigations were not done within agency timeframes. One of those was a low risk case that was contacted 26 hours after the intake rather than within 24 hours. The timeframe was missed in the other case because a

**Orangeburg County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
February 2004**

school official would not allow the caseworker to see the child without signed authorization from the child's father. The school's action was inappropriate and appears to be an isolated incident.

There were no incidents of repeat maltreatment during the period under review.

Section Two

Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.

Site Visit Findings

	Substantially Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved	Not Applicable
Foster Care	6		2	2
CPS Treatment	6			
Unfounded Investigations	1	1	3	

Measure: **Risk of harm to child** – Of all unfounded investigations during the reporting period, the percent receiving subsequent reports within six months of the initial report.

	Number Alleged Child Victims in an Unfounded Rept 6/1/02 to 5/31/03	Number With Another Rept Within 6 Months of Unfounded Determination	Number of Cases Met Objective >= 93.90%*	Number of Cases Above (Below) Objective
State	15,847	1,534	14,880.33	(567.33)
Orangeburg	288	17	270.43	0.57

Note: This is a DSS established objective.

Analysis

Safety outcome #2 was partially achieved. The outcome measure "Risk of harm to child" is a proxy measure because it counts the additional reports made on unfounded investigations. Those additional reports may or may not indicate continued risk to a child. In most instances, services to reduce the risk of harm were offered and/or provided. However, 5 of 19 cases reviewed onsite were regarded as not achieving this safety outcome.

In one case, allegations of domestic violence were among the reasons the agency accepted the report to investigate. However, the alleged perpetrator, the mother's paramour, was not interviewed and the report was unfounded. The other cases in which this was viewed as partially or not achieved generally involved children placed either in

**Orangeburg County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
February 2004**

foster care or in a relative's home without providing services to the parents to reduce the risk of harm when and if the children ever return home.

Section Three

Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.				
Site Visit Findings				
	Substantially Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved	Not Applicable
Foster Care	4	6		
CPS Treatment				X

Measure: Foster Care Re-entries – Of all children who entered care during the year under review, the percent that re-entered foster care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode.				
	Number Children Entering Care 12/1/02 to 11/30/03	Number That Were Returned Home Within The Past 12 Months From Previous Foster Care Episode	Number of Children Objective $\geq 91.40\%$ *	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	3,299	316	3,015.29	(32.29)
Orangeburg	45	5	41.13	(1.13)

Note: This is a federally established objective.

Explanation

This is an area needing improvement. Of the 45 children who entered care in Orangeburg during the period under review, 5 children had been returned home in the prior 12 months. Those 5 children are **Re-entries**. To meet the federal objective, no more than 3 of the 45 children could be re-entries. Orangeburg missed this objective by 1.13 children.

**Orangeburg County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
February 2004**

Measure: Stability of Foster Care Placement – Of all children who have been in foster care less than 12 months from the time of the latest removal from home, the percent that had not more than 2 placement settings.				
	Number of Children In Care Less Than 12 Months	Number of Children With No More Than 2 Placements	Number of Children Objective >= 86.70% *	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	3,860	3,025	3,346.62	(321.62
Orangeburg	62	54	53.75	0.25

Note: This is a federally established objective.

Measure: Length of Time to Achieve Reunification – Of all children who were reunified with their parents or caregiver, at the time of discharge from foster care, the percent reunified in less than 12 months from the time of the latest removal from home.				
	Number of Children Where Fos Care Services Closed. Last Plan Was Return Home 12/1/02 – 11/30/03	Number of Children In Care Less Than 12 Months	Number Of Children Objective >= 76.20% *	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	2,253	1,875	1,716.79	158.21
Orangeburg	43	38	32.77	5.23

Note: This is a federally established objective.

Explanation

This is a strength for Orangeburg County. To meet this objective 76.20% of the children who entered care during the reporting period must be returned home within a year of entering foster care. Orangeburg met this objective because 88.37% (38/43) of the children entering care returned home within a year of entering care. Statewide, 83.22% (1,875/2,253) of children entering care are returned home within 12 months of entering care.

**Orangeburg County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
February 2004**

Measure: Length of Time to Achieve Adoption – Of all children who exited from foster care during the year under review to a finalized adoption, the percent that exited care in less than 24 months from the time of the latest removal from home.				
	Number of Children With Finalized Adoption 12/1/02 – 11/30/03	Number of Children Where Adoption Was Finalized Within 24 Months of Entering Care	Number of Children Objective >= 32.00% *	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	283	41	90.56	(49.56)
Orangeburg	6	1	1.92	(0.92)
St. Matthews Adoptions	15	3	4.80	(1.80)

Note: This is a federally established objective.

Explanation

This is an area needing improvement. The St Matthews Adoption office numbers are included because that office managed most of the adoption cases originating in Orangeburg County.

To meet this objective 32.00% of the children adopted during the period under review must be adopted within 24 months of entering care. For the combined St. Matthews & Orangeburg offices 19.04% of the children adopted were adopted within 24 months of entering care – 12.96 percentage points short of the federally established objective. Statewide, 14.49% of children adopted through DSS are adopted within 24 months of entering care.

Stakeholder interviews conducted during the onsite portion of this review give insight into the obstacles that must be overcome for Orangeburg DSS to meet this objective.

- a) Staff and stakeholders state that the family court judges are more interested in protecting the interests of parents than protecting the interests of the children. One supervisor said, “We do concurrent planning. After about a year we try to change the case plan from Return Home to TPR & Adoption. But the judge gives them [the parent] more time.”
- b) Staff and stakeholders complained of judges granting continuances at Merit, Permanency Planning, and TPR hearings for frivolous reasons, adding months or years to the TPR and adoption process.
- c) Staff expressed concern about changing the case plan from Return Home to TPR & Adoption when dealing with drug addicted parents who are cooperating with treatment, but who relapse.

**Orangeburg County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
February 2004**

Measure: Permanency Goal for Child – Of all children who have been in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months, the percent for which a Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) petition has been filed.

	Children in Care At Least 15 of Last 22 Months 12/02 – 11/03	Number Children With TPR Complaint	Number of Children Objective ≥ 45.00% *	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	3,818	1,656	1,718.10	(62.10)
Orangeburg	85	42	38.25	3.75
St. Matthews Adoptions	60	60	27.00	33.00
Bamberg MTS	41	21	18.45	2.55

Note: This is DSS established objective. The federal agency, Administration for Children & Families, has not established an objective for this measure.

Explanation

The St. Matthews Adoption and Bamberg MTS office numbers are included because those offices manage children from Orangeburg County. To meet this objective 45.00% or more of the children in care 15 of the most recent 22 months must have a TPR petition filed. For the combined offices 66.13% of the children in care 15 of the most recent 22 months had a TPR petition filed. Statewide 43.37% of the children in care 15 of the most recent 22 months had a TPR petition filed. As a state, DSS is not meeting this objective. However, **this is a strength for Orangeburg and its associated DSS offices.**

Measure: Permanency Goal of “Other Planned Living Arrangement” – Of all children in foster care, the percent with a permanency goal of emancipation (Indep Liv Services) or a planned permanent living arrangement other than adoption, guardianship, or return to family.

	Number of Children In Care at Least One Day 12/1/02 – 11/30/03	Number of Children In Care With Perm Plan Other Than Planned Living Arrangement	Number of Children Objective ≥ 80.00% *	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	8,129	1,121	6,503.20	504.80
Orangeburg	131	24	104.80	2.20

Note: This is a DSS established objective.

Analysis

Permanency outcome #1 was partially achieved. Strengths are demonstrated in a) stability of foster care placements, b) length of time to achieve reunification, and c)

**Orangeburg County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
February 2004**

permanency planning for children in care 15 of the most recent 22 months. Areas needing improvement include a) foster care re-entries, and b) length of time to achieve adoption.

Section Four

Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.

Site Visit Findings

	Substantially Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved	Not Applicable
Foster Care	4	6		
CPS Treatment				X

Measure: Proximity of Foster Care Placement – Of all children in foster care during the reporting period (excluding MTS and Adoptions children), the percent placed within their county of origin.

	Number of Children In Care 12/1/02 – 11/30/03	Number of Children Placed Within County of Origin	Percent of Children Placed Within County of Origin	Number of Children Objective $\geq 70.00\%$ *	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	6,174	4,757	72.68	4,321.80	435.20
Orangeburg	131	115	87.79	91.70	23.30

Note: This is a DSS established objective.

Explanation

To meet this objective 70.00% of the children (or 91.70 children) in care must be placed in Orangeburg County. **This is a strength for Orangeburg DSS** because 87.79% of the children (115 children) are placed within the county.

Staff revealed that both Lexington and Bamberg Counties also place children in Orangeburg foster homes. Staff also revealed that vacant recruitment and licensing positions mean that Orangeburg DSS is not currently recruiting foster homes to replace those lost through attrition.

**Orangeburg County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
February 2004**

Site Visit Findings			
	Strength	Area Needing Improvement	Not Applicable
Placement with siblings	5		5

Explanation

This is a strength for Orangeburg DSS. Of the 10 foster care cases reviewed during the site visit, 5 children had no sibling. The five children with siblings were either placed with their siblings, or not placed with their sibling for a clinical reason. For example, one foster child was placed in the high management group home for boys, Avalonia. His sister could not be placed there.

Site Visit Findings			
	Strength	Area Needing Improvement	Not Applicable
Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care	3	7	

Explanation

This is an area needing improvement. Seven of the 10 cases reviewed were rated as an area needing improvement for several reasons, a) physical disability of parent made visitation difficult and infrequent, b) failure to explore the appropriateness of maintaining or re-establishing child's relationship with the father, c) child in therapeutic placement not visiting with siblings, etc.

Site Visit Findings			
	Strength	Area Needing Improvement	Not Applicable
Preserving connections	7	3	

Explanation

This is a strength for Orangeburg DSS. This item addresses the agency's ability to preserve a child in foster care's connection to his/her community, family, and faith. In most cases the agency attempted to keep foster children connected to their relatives and communities. This was not consistently done with paternal relatives of foster children.

Site Visit Findings			
	Strength	Area Needing Improvement	Not Applicable
Relative placement	5	5	

Explanation

This is an area needing improvement. This item addresses the agency's effectiveness in identifying and assessing the relatives of children in foster care as possible caregivers.

**Orangeburg County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
February 2004**

It also addresses the support provided to relatives who care for children involved in the child welfare system. Half of the cases reviewed were deficient in this area for several reasons, a) lack of support provided for a relative caring for three children previously in foster care, and b) failure to search for or assess appropriateness of paternal relatives as caregivers. It should be noted that half of the cases showed strengths in this area.

Site Visit Findings			
	Strength	Area Needing Improvement	Not Applicable
Relationship of child in care with parents	4	5	1

Explanation

This is an area needing improvement. This item addresses the agency's effectiveness in promoting or maintaining a strong emotionally supportive relationship between children in care and their parents. The nature and frequency of visits was generally regarded as inadequate by reviewers, stakeholders interviewed and staff. When cases are transferred, several weeks or months might pass before visits with parents are reestablished. Supervised visitation within the DSS office occurs in an environment that is not conducive to maintaining or improving the relationship between children and their parents.

Analysis

Permanency outcome #2 was partially achieved. Strengths related to this outcome include a) proximity of foster care placement, b) placement with siblings, and c) preserving connections. Areas needing improvement are a) visitation, b) placement with relatives, and c) support for relations between children in care and their parents. The strongest area, "Proximity of foster care placements", is based on the number and type of available foster homes in Orangeburg County. That area of strength may be jeopardized by the staff vacancies described above. The weakest area, "Relationship of child in care with parents", does not appear to be the result of systemic factors. In conversations, staff were able to explain why they were not working with the paternal side of a child's family. However, those reasons were not always documented in the case record.

**Orangeburg County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
February 2004**

Section Five

Well Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.				
Site Visit Findings				
	Substantially Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved	Not Applicable
Foster Care	3	6	1	
CPS Treatment	3	2	1	

Analysis

Well being outcome #1 was partially achieved. The three areas evaluated for this outcome are:

- a) The effectiveness of the agency in assessing and providing for the needs of children, their parents, and foster parents;
- b) The children and family involvement in case planning; and
- c) Worker visits with children

The effectiveness of the agency in assessing and providing for the needs of children, their parents and foster parents was rated as a strength in five of the six CPS cases and six of the ten foster care cases. The needs of children were generally attended to. Referrals were made for parents without sufficient follow through to determine if services were actually received and effective.

Involving children and parents in case planning was rated as the weakest area in both CPS and foster care cases. The process used in the county is to develop the case plan for the child and parent is a staffing among supervisors and workers. The worker then goes over the plan with the parent and child and has the parent sign the plan. Case planning staffings that involve parents and members of their own support network do not occur. Several case plans were not signed by the parents or children.

Workers are having face-to-face visits with child. Visits with parents aimed at assessing progress toward completing treatment plan objectives were rated as an area needing improvement.

**Orangeburg County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
February 2004**

Section Six

Well Being Outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.				
Site Visit Findings				
	Substantially Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved	Not Applicable
Foster Care	4	1	1	4
CPS Treatment	1		1	4

Measure: Educational Needs of the Child – Of all children that aged out of foster care, the percent that graduated from high school.				
	Number of Children Aged Out 12/1/02 – 11/30/03	Number Completing 12 th Grade or Higher	Number of Children Objective >= 90.00% *	Number of Children Above (Below) Objective
State	314	36	282.6	(246.6)
Orangeburg	6	4	5.4	(1.4)

Note: This is a DSS established objective. The Bamberg MTS and St. Matthews Adoption office numbers are not included in this table because those offices did not have children who aged out of foster care during the rating period.

Analysis

Well being outcome #2 was substantially achieved. To meet the agency established standard, all six children who aged out of foster care during the rating period would have to complete high school. The small number of children in this sub-population create that effect. Most cases were rated as substantially achieving this outcome. Stakeholders and case records give evidence of the staff's attention to the educational needs of children in care and families receiving CPS in-home services.

**Orangeburg County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
February 2004**

Section Seven

Well Being Outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.				
Site Visit Findings				
	Substantially Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved	Not Applicable
Foster Care	5	4	1	
CPS Treatment	3	3		4

Analysis

Well being outcome #3 was partially achieved. The two areas evaluated for this outcome are:

- a) Physical health of the child; and
- b) Mental health of the child.

There is evidence of caseworkers going to extraordinary lengths to meet the physical and mental health needs of children in their caseload. Mental health has a worker located in the Orangeburg DSS building so that initial mental health assessments are routinely completed.

Deficiencies in this area appear to be heavily impacted by systemic factors. Physical and mental health service providers are generally located in the City of Orangeburg. Clients living in other parts of the county must travel to the City of Orangeburg for services. Clients without their own transportation often must rely on what is called a Medicaid van. Arrival and departure times for the Medicaid van are not reliable. Consequently, clients must be ready and waiting up to two hours prior to their scheduled pick-up time. Upon completing their appointment in town, they can expect to wait up to another two hours for the van to arrive to transport them home. This makes every appointment an all-day affair.

The absence of evening or weekend services means that a working parent must miss an entire day of work each time they meet their own appointment or must accompany their child to an appointment. Consequently, appointments are often missed.

**Orangeburg County DSS
Child Welfare Services Review
February 2004**

Section Seven

Screened-Out CPS Referrals

Question: Were attempts to report incidences of abuse and/or neglect by the public appropriately screened out?		
Yes	No	Cannot Determine
1	2	7

Analysis

This is an area needing improvement. Orangeburg DSS received 325 intakes during the period from 10/1/02 thru 09/30/03. During that period 71 (21.8%) of those intakes were screened out. During the six month period reviewed by this report 54 intakes were screened out. Ten of the 54 intakes were reviewed to assess the appropriateness of the screen-out decision. Assessment of the intake decisions was based solely on information documented in CAPSS.

Noteworthy in the findings is that, in seven of the ten cases, the information documented in CAPSS was insufficient for the purpose of assessing the appropriateness of the screen-out decision. This means that, although an intake reason is given (ex. "Does not meet the legal criteria for CPS report"), no explanation supporting that judgment is documented in the system. If collateral contacts are made (ex. with the school, mental health, etc.) to gather information to support the screen-out decision, that is not documented in CAPSS. This information may be kept in a log within the county. However, if the information is not in CAPSS it is not available to intake staff in other counties who may need it to make decisions about referrals made on persons who have moved from Orangeburg County.

Based on the information recorded in CAPSS, two of the ten referrals reviewed were inappropriately screened out. In only one case was it clear that the intake was appropriately screened out.